

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 1982

U.S. Says Pakistan's Nuclear Potential Is Growing

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23 — An intelligence report has concluded that Pakistan will be able to detonate a nuclear device within the next three years, but is not likely to do so, according to Administration and Congressional officials.

This conclusion is contained in an analysis, known as "Special National Intelligence Estimate 31-81," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency and completed last month.

Intelligence officials assert that Pakistan's reticence to conduct an atomic

test stems partly from President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq's unwillingness to jeopardize the Reagan Administration's six-year, \$3.2 billion military and economic aid program.

The study also contends that Pakistan is likely to continue developing and stockpiling fissile material that could be used in a nuclear device. Continued development of Pakistan's nuclear program, analysts argue, is likely to prompt increasing suspicion and hostility from India. As a result, according to the report, Pakistan could face a growing threat of a pre-emptive strike

by India against its nuclear installations by the end of this year.

India and Pakistan will hold talks in New Delhi next Friday on a security pact. Foreign Minister Agha Shahi of Pakistan is expected to discuss proposals for a "nuclear-free zone" in South-west Asia with his Indian counterpart, P. V. Narasimha Rao.

'Irregularities' Reported

The discussions are being closely followed by officials at the International Atomic Energy Agency, based in Vienna, which monitors nuclear plants. The

agency has been pressing Pakistan unsuccessfully for several months to permit the installation of additional cameras and measuring devices to improve safeguards at Pakistan's 135-megawatt nuclear reactor, near Karachi.

The agency made its request after it detected "anomalies" and "irregularities" at the reactor, which is capable of producing plutonium for atomic weapons. There is no evidence that Pakistan has been diverting fuel from its civilian reactor for nonpeaceful purposes. But the agency expressed concern at a private meeting last September that the current monitoring arrangements were no longer adequate, given Pakistan's ability to produce its own nuclear fuel.

The India-Pakistan talks and the agency's effort to improve safeguards

are of concern to the Reagan Administration, which persuaded Congress last month to approve \$100 million in aid for Pakistan, a downpayment on the six-year program. In addition, the United States is selling Pakistan 40 F-16 fighter planes on an accelerated schedule. The Administration says Pakistan needs the planes to help withstand Soviet pressures from neighboring Afghanistan.

Pakistan had previously been barred from receiving American aid by a law that prohibits assistance to countries that pursue nuclear weapon programs. Congress suspended aid in 1979 on the basis of evidence that Pakistan had established a worldwide network of purchasing agents, including bogus companies and intelligence operatives, to obtain components for a uranium centri-

fuge enrichment plant that could be used to make fuel for weapons.

India Detonated Device in 1974
India detonated an atomic device in 1974, but maintained that its test was a "peaceful nuclear explosion," a distinction the United States does not accept.

The Reagan Administration has argued that Pakistan can only be dissuaded from conducting a nuclear test if it would jeopardize a strong security relationship with the United States. The new estimate tends to support this claim.

The estimate's conclusion is privately disputed by some foreign policy analysts, who doubt that Pakistan will be willing to forego a demonstrable nuclear weapons option, in light of the previous test by India.

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